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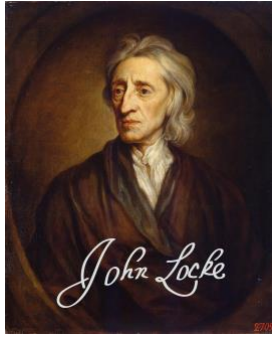
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Roland Hall: An Appreciation

TIMOTHY STANTON

Abstract:

Roland Hall, who died in May of this year at age 87, founded the *Locke Newsletter* (now *Locke Studies*) in 1970 and edited it for the next 42 years. It is in this capacity, and for his comprehensive bibliographical works on Locke and Hume, that he is likely best known to current readers of the journal. Other aspects of his life may not be so well known to them. As a philosopher his interests and accomplishments embraced much besides Locke. He enjoyed a second, parallel career as a highly respected lexicographer, working as a consultant and contributor to the *Oxford English Dictionary*. After the Second World War, at a relatively young age, he played a significant supporting role in a major war crimes trial. This appreciation of his life will say something about each of these aspects of it.

Keywords: Locke Newsletter, Locke Studies, Roland Hall, philosophy

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Roland Hall, who died in May of this year at age 87, founded the *Locke Newsletter* (now *Locke Studies*) in 1970 and edited it for the next 42 years. It is in this capacity, and for his comprehensive bibliographical works on Locke and Hume, that he is likely to be best known to current readers of the journal. Other aspects of his life may not be so well known to them. As a philosopher his interests and accomplishments embraced much besides Locke. He enjoyed a second, parallel career as a highly respected lexicographer, working as a consultant and contributor to the *Oxford English Dictionary*. After the Second World War, at a relatively young age, he played a significant supporting role in a major war crimes trial. This appreciation of his life will say something about each of these aspects of it.

Roland was born in Hounslow on 11 July 1930. About 1920 his father had moved to London from Coventry and set up a garage business there which became eventually quite prosperous, prosperous enough to pay for Roland to be educated privately at the preparatory school of Hounslow College. (The business was closed down during the war and the family's circumstances were reduced.) In 1942 he took a competitive examination with over a hundred other boys from London and was in the small fraction who succeeded in gaining a place at Christ's Hospital, Horsham, a venerable educational establishment whose alumni include the antiquary and historian William Camden, the Anglican theologian Edward Stillingfleet, the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Barnes Wallis, the inventor of the bouncing bomb. Roland was a pupil at the school for the next seven years. He recalled his time there with great fondness, not only for the quality of the teaching he received but also for the opportunities it gave him to develop interests in woodworking, gardening, listening to classical music (for which he retained a deep love throughout his life), and playing rugby, badly. He excelled in French, but opted to specialize in Latin and Greek, winning a scholarship to Oxford a year ahead of his time.

Roland did not take up his university place right away. In 1949 he joined the British Army for National Service. After basic training, which included touch typing, he was found a position where, in the words of one of his superiors, "his brain would not atrophy." This was as Clerk to General Frank Simpson, the President of the Court at the British War Crimes Unit in Hamburg, during the four-month trial of Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, regarded as Hitler's greatest General.¹ Manstein had been taken prisoner by the British in August 1945. He testified for the defence of the German General Staff and the Wehrmacht supreme command at the Nuremberg trials of major Nazi war criminals and organizations in August 1946. Under pressure from the Soviet Union to hand him over, the British cabinet had decided in July 1948 to prosecute Manstein and several other senior officers held in custody since the end of the war. Roland's job was to collate and safeguard all the written evidence for the Court, which he read in its entirety, and to keep track of the Court's proceedings. This experience had a profound effect on Roland, only 19 at the time. It convinced him of the justification for war in the face of great evil, though, having seen the evidence against Manstein, he was amazed at the severity of the sentence passed upon him. When the sentence was given, he was able to hear it through the sliding doors of the room behind the court in which he was working and wondered whether he had misheard "18 years" for "18 months," which would have made more sense to him.

¹ For the Manstein trial, see Mungo Melvin, *Manstein: Hitler's Greatest General* (London: St. Martin's Press, 2010).

At the end of the trial, General Simpson was instrumental in Roland joining the British Forces Network, where he was responsible for producing classical music programmes at the Musikhalle for the Allied forces in Western Europe. He often ate at the Church Army café near the Alster and spoke with the German musicians playing there. One day he asked them about a particular piece of music they were playing. After that, they played Bruch's Violin Concerto whenever he came in.

Lest the impression have been given that his Army service was not very military, it should be added that Roland's pay-book records that he was a first-class shot, meaning that he could hit the bullseye with a rifle at 300 yards. (Readers who had their contributions to *Locke Studies* edited by him will know the feeling.) It was during his time in the army that Roland learned German, not so much from conversational practice as from books and his army vocabulary notebooks, becoming proficient enough to read whole books in German within a year. Starting as he meant to go on, the first was Kafka's *das Schloss*.² The second was Friedrich Waismann's *Einführung in das mathematische Denken*.³

In 1950 Roland took up his scholarship to Oxford, attending Keble College, where he read Literae Humaniores (known colloquially as "Mods and Greats"), a four-year degree course in Latin and Greek literature, ancient history, and philosophy ancient and modern. He spent his time reading the whole of Thucydides, Catullus, Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Ethics* in the originals. In 1954 he gained a "First," one of his proudest achievements. This opened up the prospect of an academic career, but Roland chose to remain in Oxford to do a further degree, the B.Phil, which was (and is) a professional teaching qualification in philosophy. He obtained the B.Phil under the supervision of two of the great names of linguistic philosophy, J. L. Austin and, briefly, Gilbert Ryle (when Austin was away in America). It was Austin who suggested that Roland should work on "a big word like 'as'" when contemplating topics for his Bachelor's thesis and who gave him a method, this being to "start with the dictionary." Ignoring his supervisor's sage warning against going into the academic profession—"There's no money in it"—he took his first job in 1956 as Assistant in Logic at the University of St. Andrews. The next year he moved to Queen's College, Dundee, as Lecturer in Philosophy, becoming Senior Lecturer in 1966. From 1961 to 1967 he was Assistant Editor of *The Philosophical Quarterly*. In 1967 he was appointed Reader in Philosophy at the University of York, where he remained until his retirement in 1994.

Much of Roland's earliest philosophical writing showed the influence of Austin and Ryle in its style and ambitions. One early essay drew attention to the ubiquity of the philosophically troublesome adjectives he termed "Excluders." These were adjectives that were attributive rather than predicative, ruled some things out without themselves adding anything, and ambiguously ruled out different things according to context (as, e.g., "real" tiger might rule out "paper" tiger, "stuffed" tiger, man in a tiger suit, "imaginary" tiger, "chocolate" tiger, and so on, and so on). His aim was to draw attention to the extent to

² Franz Kafka, *Das Schloss* (Munich: Wolff, 1926).

³ Friedrich Waismann, *Einführung in das mathematische Denken: die Begriffsbildung der modernen Mathematik* (Vienna: Gerold, 1947).

which they pervaded the English language.⁴ When it was published, Ryle sent a congratulatory postcard. Another essay, “Assuming,” targeted the Austrian psychologist and philosopher Alexius Meinong’s view that positing acts bespeak mental states or operations. Roland argued that these words described no special activity and that “we cannot say what [they] refer to, because they do not refer to anything.”⁵ This was all in keeping with linguistic philosophy’s aim to dissolve rather than solve problems relating to the reification of mind. A third essay, published in the *Classical Quarterly*, drew upon Roland’s knowledge of Greek in investigating the diction of the *Eudemian Ethics* of Aristotle, which used to be regarded at that time as spurious on the basis of its hapax logomena and other idiosyncracies. (Nowadays everybody takes it to be by Aristotle.) Roland attempted to refute the case for rejecting the work on this ground and was gratified to discover, late in life, that a German scholar, in his monograph on the *Eudemian Ethics*, had described the essay as “gruendlich und besonnen.”⁶

Roland did not share his supervisors’ slightly snuffy attitudes towards the history of philosophy. As an undergraduate student he had read and been impressed by John Passmore’s *A Hundred Years of Philosophy*, and when Austin sparked his interest in logic with the suggestion that he read W. V. O. Quine’s *Methods of Logic* (which he did immediately), Roland developed that interest in an historical way, reading back into the early history of English logics as well as contemporary works such as A. N. Prior’s *Formal Logic*. Eventually he reckoned that he had read the first 28 books on the subject of logic written by philosophers in the English language. At one time he had the idea of publishing something on Aristotle’s logic in the *Topics*, but this idea was put to one side when, still a young philosophy lecturer at Dundee, he came upon an appeal issued by Oxford University Press, asking for volunteers to help find quotation evidence for particular words being considered for inclusion in the new Supplement to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, work on which had only just begun under the editorship of Robert Burchfield.

Roland had been interested in the *OED* from an early age, and he had relied upon it as the starting point of his philosophical work under Austin. He wrote to the Press without delay offering to join in the search for evidence. By March 1959 he was already making numerous contributions to the Supplement, and he was soon asked to help in another way: by reading back issues of the philosophy journal *Mind*, starting with those published in 1933 (the year in which the first Supplement had been published), looking out for new words and senses of words that the compilers of the new Supplement might wish to include. Quickly realizing that he was onto a good thing, Burchfield found further possibilities: William James had not been read for the Dictionary, so he asked Roland to read him entire. Roland took this request literally, and went beyond the printed works to letters, not all of which were then in print. He pointed out to Burchfield in return first that J. S. Mill and then that Locke were not adequately covered, so he was asked to read the whole of both, which he duly did.

⁴ Roland Hall, “Excluders,” *Analysis* 20 (1959): 1–7, at 1.

⁵ Roland Hall, “Assuming: One Set of Positing Words,” *The Philosophical Review* 67 (1958): 52–75, at 55. For discussion, see David Scott, “Roland Hall,” in *The Dictionary of Twentieth-Century British Philosophers*, ed. Stuart Brown (Bristol, Thoemmes Press, 2005), vol. 1, 322–23, at 322.

⁶ That is to say, meticulous and shrewd (my translation)

Burchfield recognized that someone with his specialist knowledge and gift for precision might also be able to help in another way, and he was soon being asked to draft definitions of philosophical terms for the Supplement. He began work in earnest on this task in 1963—working from the quotations that had been collected by other readers for the Supplement, which were posted to him in Dundee, sometimes distinguishing senses and/or finding citations of other uses—and he went on drafting definitions, both in philosophy and linguistics, for the next several years.

In all he drafted about 400 entries in A–C alone, including “badger-game” [= “An extortion scheme in which a man is lured, usu[ally] by a woman (the badger or badger-worker) into a compromising situation and is then surprised and blackmailed by her accomplice”] and “Bronx cheer” [= “A sound of contempt or derision made by blowing through closed lips, usually with the tongue between”]. Burchfield apologized for sending materials of this type to Roland but claimed in mitigation that B was “a very unphilosophical letter.” Roland would sometimes make his own suggestions for inclusion that were subsequently taken up, such as “assertion sign,” (“the sign introduced by G. Frege in 1879 to indicate that the signs following it express a proposition which is asserted to be a true judgement; the same sign used in related senses; also in extended use of other signs considered equivalent in function”)⁷ and he made important alterations and emendations to other notable philosophical terms such as “substance.” A proportion of his investigations were written up as articles, more than 50 in total, and published in the journal *Notes & Queries*. These consisted largely of lists and comments on *OED* omissions and antedatings from philosophical texts by Locke, Hume, Mill, and others. It was Roland who identified the original context of the many hundreds of quotations from Locke which had been cited in the first edition of the *OED* from Johnson’s dictionary without full reference.

Roland put this considerable learning to work in one way as an industrious and inspiring teacher, a role which he embraced for virtually 50 years. Long after his retirement he was being asked to design and run courses for medical students in order to round out an otherwise purely scientific education. He enjoyed this very much, covering such topics as Ancient Medicine, the Psychology of Happiness, and Ancient Greek for medical terms. Teaching made him happy.

He put his learning to work in another way as an erudite reviewer of academic books, especially books on philosophy, logic, and the history of philosophy. A review of Anscombe’s bilingual edition of Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* (3rd ed., 1967), for instance, drew attention to multiple deficiencies and infelicities of translation.⁸ Giovanni Vailati’s *Il metodo della filosofia* (1957) received praise for bringing to clearer light a strain of Italian pragmatism overlooked by Passmore.⁹ Patrick Gardiner’s short book on *Schopenhauer* (1963)—on whose understanding of the will Roland would later

⁷ Roland also supplied the accompanying citations from Russell, Whitehead, and Wittgenstein.

⁸ *The Philosophical Quarterly* 17 (1967): 362–3.

⁹ *The Philosophical Quarterly* 10 (1960): 372.

publish in the *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch*—was well-received too,¹⁰ unlike Maurice Cowling’s *Mill and Liberalism* (1963), which was rebuked for its “partial, one-sided and misleading exposition” of Mill’s views and condemned as “dangerous, pretentious, and unpleasant.”¹¹ It may be worth pointing out that Cowling himself recited parts of this verdict with evident relish: in the “Preface to the Second Edition” of that work, published in 1990, he wrote of “one [reviewer] describing it, obligingly, as ‘dangerous and unpleasant,’ which was what it was intended to be.”¹² Cowling had not set out to be fair to Mill, which was one reason why Roland disliked his book so much.

A third line of activity came to fruition in the bibliographical compilations at which Roland was so adept, which began with short chronological listings of philosophical works on free will (since Augustine)¹³ and the analytic-synthetic distinction (since Kant)¹⁴ and flowered into two major works, *Fifty Years of Hume Scholarship: A Bibliographical Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1978) and *Eighty Years of Locke Scholarship: A Bibliographical Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983), the latter edited with Roger Woolhouse,¹⁵ Roland’s colleague at York. Both works remain standard points of reference for scholars to this day. Roland supplemented these exhaustive listings with regular updates to both works, sometimes via a fourth outlet of his intellectual energies, *The Locke Newsletter*, which he started in 1970 as a free circulation sheet of only a handful of pages, on the model of the now defunct *Mill Newsletter*. By 1991 the *Locke Newsletter* had outgrown its origins and was attracting high-quality submissions from academics around the world. It was rechristened *Locke Studies: An Annual Journal of Locke Research* and remains the only journal in the world devoted to the study of Locke and his works. There is a certain pleasing symmetry in the fact that Roland lived long enough to see it return to its origins as an open access resource for scholars, albeit in this very different format. Correspondence from the early 1970s attests to Roland’s reluctance to charge recipients even for postage, though R. I. Aaron, a keen subscriber to the *Newsletter* from the beginning, urged him to make everyone pay for it.

Early issues confirm the special delight Roland took in exploring little puzzles about Locke’s philosophy, the picking-up of hints in his writings about what and whom he had read that had been missed, or of small details of publication history that had eluded generations of readers (such as the fact that for 300 years the appearance of C. Velleius the Epicurean on the title-page of Locke’s *Essay* had gone unremarked because from the

¹⁰ The Philosophical Quarterly 14 (1964): 174–5.

¹¹ The Philosophical Quarterly 15 (1965): 69–71, at 71.

¹² Maurice Cowling, *Mill and Liberalism*, 2nd ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), xii.

¹³ Roland Hall, “Free Will: A Short Bibliography,” The Philosophical Quarterly 15 (1965): 179–81.

¹⁴ Roland Hall, “Analytic–Synthetic: A Bibliography,” The Philosophical Quarterly 16 (1966): 178–81.

¹⁵ For more on Woolhouse, see Roland Hall, “Roger Stuart Woolhouse (1940–2011),” *Locke Studies* 11 (2011): 13–15.

first printing his name had not been printed but another word substituted in its place.) That was the way his mind worked. He was not given to abstruse metaphysical speculation, but his modest manner of proceeding belied the significance of some of his own philosophical work on Locke, in particular his reinterpretation of Locke's compositionalism. This is the theory that complex ideas in knowledge are built up of simpler ones. Roland rejected the orthodox view that with Locke we originally perceive simple ideas and combine these in different ways to form complex ideas (perhaps influenced by his own reflections on the nature and structure of language), and this led him to a re-evaluation of some key terms in Locke's philosophical vocabulary, such as "sensation," "imagination," "reason," "idea," and "experience."¹⁶

Roland was twice married: to Daphne Blenkiron in 1954 (divorced 1991), with whom he had three daughters, and to Roma Hutchinson in 1995. Roma provided tireless editorial assistance with *Locke Studies* and was jointly responsible for the virtual monopoly Roland enjoyed for some years over the *Financial Times*' annual "Polymath" crossword prize.

On his eightieth birthday, Roland had occasion to look back over many of the events and achievements of his own life, but he ended by speaking of the things that really mattered in life, or what counted for him:

In the Ancient World [he said] there were seven wonders of the world, such as the Colossus of Rhodes and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon; but in the modern world there are perhaps seven wonders, more or less accessible to everyone. They are, in rough order of importance to me: love, music, visual arts, literature (especially poetry and prose fiction), friendship, conversation, histories. These are all useless. At any rate, in their purest form, they are not means to something else for which they can be used, but valuable in themselves. These are the real goods of life, according to me; they provide the needed enrichment, & beauty runs through most of these. You may of course have a different list [he continued], preferring sport and games to conversation, for instance, but these are my choices, as far as I can be sure about them.

These words were included in the order of service for Roland's funeral, at which an excerpt from Bruch's Violin Concerto was played. His friendship and his conversation will be missed by all who knew him.

University of York

¹⁶ See Scott, "Roland Hall," 323.

Select Bibliography of Roland Hall
A CHRONOLOGICAL LISTING

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